

Honi and the Carob Tree

The following story should be read at the preparatory program just before Shabbat services on Friday afternoon.

Rabbi Yohanan said: Throughout his life, the tzaddik, Honi ha-Ma'agel, (a talmudic miracle worker), was always troubled by the verse:

שִׁיר הַמַּא'לוֹת. בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הֲיִינוּ בְּחֹלְמִים :

"Shir ha-ma'alot: be-shuv adonai et shivat tzion, hayinu ke-cholmim

A song of ascents, when the Lord returns the exile of Zion-we see it as in a dream .

He said, "Is there anyone who dreams for seventy years? In other words, is it possible that the whole seventy-year exile would seem like a dream?"

One day, he was walking down the road when he saw a man planting a carob tree.

Honi said to the man, "How many years will this tree need to produce fruit ?"

The man answered, "Seventy years".

Honi said, "Is it so clear to you that you will live seventy years?"

The man answered, "I found carob trees in the world. Just like my ancestors planted for me, I plant for my children".

Honi sat to eat some bread, and fell asleep.

A pile of rocks and dirt rose around him, and he was hidden from sight. He slept for seventy years.

When he woke up, he saw the same man picking (carobs) from the tree. Honi said to him, "Are you the man who planted this tree?"

The man answered, "I am his grandson".

Honi said to him, "From this it is possible to learn that people can sleep for seventy years".

Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Ta'anit 23a